

CONGRESSWOMAN

Carolyn McCarthy

Veterans Accomplishments - 107th Congress

The brave men and women called to service after the tragic events of September 11 to defend America's interests here and abroad will be tomorrow's veterans. Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy believes America must live up to the responsibility of providing the resources necessary to care for our veterans.

PROTECTING OUR NATION'S FLAG

- √ Congresswoman McCarthy believes the American flag is our most sacred national symbol. That is why she co-sponsored and supported legislation calling for a Constitutional amendment to protect the flag against desecration.
- √ On July 17, 2001, the House passed H.J. Res 36 which proposes that the Constitution of the United States be amended granting Congress the authority to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.

PROTECTING OUR VETERAN'S HEALTH CARE

- √ Congresswoman McCarthy introduced **H.R. 3796, the Improving Access to Veterans Health Care Act**. This bill, which has bipartisan support, requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to place priority 7 veterans who are determined to be eligible for low-income assistance, in category 5. Category placement is important because the Veterans Administration only reimburses the Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISN) for the care that the VISN provides to veterans in categories 1 through 6. The fact that VISN 3 leads the nation in both inpatient and outpatient category 7 veterans has worsened the funding shortfall it has experienced over the past several years.
- √ **H.R. 511, Veterans' Right to Know Act**, Congresswoman McCarthy supports improving outreach programs carried out by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- √ **H.R.612, Persian Gulf War Illness Compensation Act**, would amend the veterans' benefits compensation program for Persian Gulf War veterans' disabilities.
- √ **H.R. 639, Veterans Hepatitis C Health Care Act**, establishes a program for testing and treatment of vets for the Hepatitis C virus.

- ✓ **H.R. 801, Veterans Survivor Benefits Enhancement Act**, Congresswoman McCarthy cosponsored this bill, creating new life insurance and health care benefits for up to 2 million eligible spouses and children of veterans.
- ✓ **H.R. 811, Veterans Hospital Emergency Repair Act**, the Congresswoman voted for legislation authorizing \$250 million in FY 2002 and \$300 million in FY 2003 to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for major medical facility construction projects. *Passed the House on March 27, 2001.*
- ✓ **H.R. 2633, Veterans Equal Treatment Act**, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to replace the current funding formula with a more equitable one.
- ✓ **H.R. 2634, Equitable Care for All Veterans Act**, would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to modify the formula to take into account differences in the cost of living for geographic regions.
- ✓ **H.R. 3447, the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported this bill. It will enable the VA nurses to pursue advanced degrees while continuing to care for veterans. Also, the bill requires the VA to develop a nationwide policy on staffing standards to ensure that veterans are provided with safe and high quality care. *Passed House December 11, 2001. Became Public Law 107-135 on January 23, 2002.*
- ✓ **H.R. 179, the Keep Our Promise to America's Military Retirees Act**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported this bipartisan bill which is aimed at restoring healthcare coverage to retired members of the armed services.
- ✓ **H.R. 1911, the Veterans Medicare Reimbursement Demonstration Act of 2001**, is supported by Congresswoman McCarthy. The bill establishes a demonstration project to provide for Medicare reimbursement for health care services provided for eligible veterans.
- ✓ **H.R. 2607, the Bronx Vets Bill**, cosponsored by Congresswoman McCarthy, authorizes a project to renovate the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Bronx, New York.
- ✓ **H.R. 2820**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported this bill which would suspend for five years the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to increase the co-payment amount in effect for medication furnished by the Secretary on an outpatient basis for the treatment of non-service-connected disabilities.
- ✓ **H.R. 3771**, this bill excludes monetary benefits paid to a veteran from a State or municipality from consideration as income for purposes of pension benefits paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

HELPING OUR DISABLED VETERANS

- √ **H.R. 303, Retired Pay Restoration Act of 2001**, the Congresswoman supported this legislation, which would permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both military retired pay by reason of their years of military service and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability.
- √ **H.R. 2540, Veterans Benefits Act of 2001**, Congresswoman McCarthy voted for legislation providing a cost-of-living adjustment to the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and to the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. *Passed House on December 11, 2001. Became Public Law No: 107-94 on December 21, 2001.*
- √ **H.R. 844**, This bill would amend title XVI of the Social Security Act to provide that annuities paid by States to blind veterans shall be disregarded in determining supplemental security income benefits. Congresswoman McCarthy supported this bill.
- √ **H.R. 936, the Heather French Henry Homeless Veterans Assistance Act**, this bill would improve programs for homeless veterans and it encourages all Federal, State, and local departments and agencies to work toward the national goal of ending homelessness among veterans within a decade.
- √ **H.R. 1435, the Veterans' Emergency Telephone Service Act of 2001**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported this bill which authorizes the awarding of grants for a national toll-free hotline to provide information and assistance to veterans.

PROTECTING VETERANS BENEFITS

- √ **H.R. 1291 - 21st Century Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act**, Congresswoman McCarthy voted for this bill to increase the amount of educational benefits available under the Montgomery GI Bill from the current monthly rate of \$650 for a minimum three-year enlistment to \$1,100 over three years. *Passed House on June 19. Became Public Law No: 107-103 December 27, 2001.*

This bill contains a series of provisions to aid veterans and their surviving dependents. They include:

- **COLA Increase** - This bill provides a cost-of-living adjustment for compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans.
- **Homeless Veterans** - Authorizes \$100 million over five years for the veterans reintegration program. These funds would be distributed through community-based employment programs through the Labor Department.
- **World War II Monument** - Authorizes the construction of a World War II memorial in Washington, D.C.

- **National Cemeteries** - Given the expect increase in burials through 2008, this bill directs the Veterans Department to obligate advance planning funds during FY2000 to establish four new national cemeteries for veterans.
- **Expanded Disability** - This bill adds bronchio-alveolar carcinoma, a rare form of lung cancer not associated with tobacco use, to the list of diseases presumed to be service-connected. In addition, it authorizes the payment to surviving spouses of certain former prisoners of war who died with a service-connect disability deemed totally disabling at the time of death. Furthermore, it restores education and housing loans to surviving spouses who lost eligibility for these benefits as the result of remarriage.
- **Reservists** - Provides permanent eligibility to former members of the selected reserve for veteran's housing loans.
- **Quality Assurance** - Establishes an enhanced quality assurance program within the veterans benefits administration.

√ **H.R. 3240, Reservists Education Protection Act of 2001**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported legislation restoring educational assistance to participants in VA-administered programs who have received benefits for the pursuance of courses which they were unable to complete because either they were called to active duty or, in the case of active-duty servicemen, were relocated and/or assigned duties that prevented them from completing their courses. *The bill passed the House on November 13, 2001.*

√ **H.R. 3423, the Arlington National Cemetery Bill**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported legislation that makes eligible for in-ground burial a member or former member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces who at the time of death was under 60 years of age and but for age, would have been eligible for military retired pay under title 10 and authorizes the Secretary of the Army to construct a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery honoring the victims of the acts of terrorism perpetrated against the United States on September 11, 2001. *Passed the House on December 19, 2001.*

√ Supported and voted for **H.R. 2716, the Heather French Henry Homeless Veterans Assistance Act**, which improves laws relating to homeless by establishing a grant program for homeless veterans with special needs and establishes an Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans. *It passed the House on December 11, 2001, by voice vote. Became Public Law No: 107-95 on December 21, 2001.*

√ **H.R. 548, the Military Survivor Benefits Improvement Act of 2001**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported this bill which would increase the minimum Survivor Benefit Plan basic annuity for surviving spouses age 62 and older.

√ **H.R. 879, Veterans Tobacco-Related Illness Benefits Restoration Act of 2001**, Congresswoman McCarthy supported this bill which aims to restore veterans tobacco-related illness benefits.

HONORING THE SACRIFICES OF VETERANS

- ✓ **H.Res.298, Sense of the House–Veteran’s Day should be observed November 11**
Congresswoman McCarthy voted to ensure Veteran’s Day is maintained as a legal public holiday separate from all other federal holidays and days for elections or national observances is the least that a grateful nation should do in recognition of its veterans.
- ✓ **H.CON.RES.20, Support Goals of Veterans Educate Today's Students (VETS) Day,**
the Congresswoman sponsored this resolution expressing support for the goals of Veterans Educate Today's Students (VETS) Day, a program that educates children about the service of veterans and the sacrifices made by them and their families).
- ✓ **H.R. 510, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Act,** Congresswoman McCarthy cosponsored this bill, which would authorize the design and construction of a education center at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the District of Columbia.
- ✓ **S.Con.Res.44, which expresses the Sense of the Congress regarding National Pearl Harbor Day,** pays tribute to the United States citizens who died in the attack, and the members of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. *Passed the House on May 21, 2001.*
- ✓ **H.R. 606, Leonard Kravitz Jewish War Veterans Act,** Congresswoman McCarthy wants to require the secretaries of the military departments to conduct reviews of military service records to determine whether certain Jewish American war veterans, including those previously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross, or Air Force Cross, should be awarded the Medal of Honor.
- ✓ **H.R. 1198, Justice for United States Prisoners of War Act,** she supported legislation to protect actions in Federal court by members of the United States Armed Forces held as a prisoners of war by Japan during World War II against Japanese nationals.
- ✓ **H.R. 1696, Expediting the construction of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia.** The measure allows the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) to proceed expeditiously with construction at the dedicated Rainbow Pool site. *Passed House on May 15, 2001. Became Public Law No: 107-11 on May 28, 2001.*
- ✓ **HR. 2561, Living American Hero Appreciation Act.** This legislation increases from \$600 to \$1,000 the monthly special pension for Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, makes such award retroactive from the date the Medal was awarded, and makes such amount subject to an annual cost-of-living adjustment. *Passed House on December 20, 2001.*